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**Abstract**

*'Localness' has gained currency as a source of authenticity and distinction in the niche marketing of the globalised new economy. This has created opportunities for peripheral minority language sites to capitalise on their geographically and culturally peripheral location, and has lifted tourism and handicraft industries to key sites of socio-economic development in these regions. Although 'localness' may seem like a ready source of economic gain in cultural production in such sites, it does not come without consequences for the cultural entrepreneurs. This paper explores what is at stake for cultural entrepreneurs in the promotion of localness as a source of authenticity. The study focuses on two ceramic artists working in two peripheral minority language contexts, Sámiiland in northern Lapland, and the Dingle Peninsula in the West of Ireland. Drawing on a nexus analytical approach combining multimodal discourse analysis and ethnographic approaches, the study investigates how the two artists draw and struggle to draw on the idea of localness in their work, examines the practices and semiotic resources they utilise, and explores the conditions and consequences of these discursive and material investments. The examination draws attention to how authenticities are always political, and, although discursively produced, have very material consequences for the actors involved in their production. On a broader plane, the study provides insight into how discourse 'matters' (in both senses of the expression) in contemporary conditions, in which identity, culture and creativity have become major economic resources.*

**Keywords:** authenticity, localness, handicrafts, new economy, semiotic resources, nexus analysis

**1. Introduction**

'Localness' has gained currency as a source of authenticity and distinction in the niche marketing of the globalised new economy, and especially in the expanding sphere of cultural tourism (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Torabian and Arai 2013; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011; Pietikäinen 2013a; Coupland et al. 2005; Heller 2003, 2011; Weiss 2011; McLaughlin 2013). The increased value of localness and 'all things local' (Weiss 2011: 444) has created opportunities especially for peripheral minority language sites to capitalise on their (putatively) distinctive and exotic cultural features and traditions, and has lifted tourism and handicraft industries to key sites of socio-economic development in these regions (e.g. Heller 2003; Pietikäinen

and Kelly-Holmes 2011; Pujolar 2013; Coupland et al. 2005). Although 'localness' may seem like a ready source of economic gain in cultural production in such sites, it does not come without consequences for the cultural entrepreneurs. One consequence relates to the fact that 'localness', like authenticity, is hardly an inherent property of goods, but rather a result of semiotic work (cf. Weiss 2011; Heller 2011; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011). Another derives directly from the key characteristic of the trope: localness implies a connection to a particular place.

This paper explores what is at stake for cultural entrepreneurs in the promotion of localness as a source of authenticity. To do so, the study, part of a larger research project,<sup>1</sup> focuses on two ceramic artists working in two peripheral minority language contexts, Sámiland in northern Lapland, and the Dingle Peninsula in the West of Ireland, both sites of the growing business of heritage tourism and handicrafts. More specifically, the paper investigates how the two artists draw and struggle to draw on the idea of localness in their work, examines the practices and semiotic resources they utilise in doing so, and explores the conditions and consequences of these discursive and material investments. For this purpose, the study draws on a nexus analytical framework (Scollon and Scollon 2004) combining multimodal discourse analytical and ethnographic approaches (van Leeuwen 2005; Blommaert 2005; Pennycook 2010; Heller 2008). Although currently being promoted as a seminal branch of the local 'the creative industry' especially in the Irish context, ceramics belongs traditionally to neither Sámi nor Irish cultural heritage. As such, ceramics production forms a site which particularly well throws into relief both the semiotic work that goes into the production of authenticity *qua* localness and the problematics of the business. The examination shows how the notion of localness, while itself living from increased global mobility, works not only to gear the artistic production towards this particular *signifiant*, but also towards fixing the material work process and the working bodies to particular places. Through the need to demonstrate localness in ever new ways, material work turns into semiotic work and as such, instead of constituting a mere source of commodities, it becomes a commodity itself.

To provide a background for this analysis, in the next section, I first discuss the main theoretical concepts of the study, authenticity, localness and discourse, and then set the study in the context of relevant recent research on authenticity in cultural tourism. In Section 3, I first introduce the two minority language sites focused on in this study, concentrating especially on the increased significance of the crafts industry in these regions, and then the two crafts artists working in these sites. Section 4 provides an overview of the methodology and the data of the study. Section 5 analyses the semiotic resources and practices the artists draw upon in their work, focusing first on the production process, then on the semiotics of the products. The article concludes with consideration of the broader implications of the promotion of localness as a source of authenticity in contemporary 'creative industry'.

## **2. Authenticity, Localness and Discourse**

Drawing on contemporary understandings of both applied linguistics and tourism research, the present study views authenticity as a discursive construction rather than a pre-discursive, inherent property of things (e.g. Coupland et al. 2005; Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Heller 2011; Pietikäinen 2013a; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011; Torabian and Arai 2013; Yang and Wall 2009). Discourse is understood here in a broad sense as (a means of) social action, encompassing besides language also other semiotic resources, such as images and gestures (e.g. Kauppinen 2012; van Leeuwen 2005). To put the same in more dynamic terms, 'discourse [-] comprises all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use' (Blommaert 2005: 3). Moreover, as the quote implies, 'the discursive' is constitutive of 'the material' and vice versa (e.g. Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Blommaert 2005; Scollon and Scollon 2004). Being discursively produced, authenticity is always relative to the context and the participants, and exists *de facto* only in the plural, with different authenticities drawing on different sources (cf. Coupland et al. 2005; Pietikäinen 2013a). Thus, authenticity drawing on 'localness' can be considered one particular type of authenticity. However, like 'authenticity', 'localness' is not a fixed property of things but rather, as Weiss (2011) shows in his study on the production of 'local pork', a discursively produced and rather ambiguous attribute referring to different kinds of connections to a particular place or region (see also Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Heller 2011: 161, 162). As has been pointed out in previous research (e.g. Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Coupland 2003; Pietikäinen 2013a), authenticity is not a neutral concept, but authenticity - and different authenticities - have more or less value in different political economies of authenticities, which in turn has ideological and material consequences for the actors participating in these economies, as will be discussed later in this study. Authenticities are thus political; terrain of power relations and conflicting interests.

Despite - or perhaps because of - its multiplicity and ontological volatility, authenticity is booming in the niche marketing of the new economy. It plays an especially crucial role in the field of cultural tourism (cf. e.g. Xie and Wall 2002; Pietikäinen 2013a). Tourists seek, and are offered, 'authentic' experiences. Against the backdrop of this development and the theoretical insights outlined above, recent studies in both sociolinguistics and tourism research have directed their attention to the production and consumption of authenticity in the context of cultural, or heritage, tourism. In her seminal research on the Franco-Canadian context, Heller (e.g. 2003; 2011) investigated the 'commodification of authenticity' in heritage tourism and beyond, and especially the appropriation of the notion of *terroir* to highlight the distinctiveness of particular regions and products originating in these regions. Coupland, Bishop and Garret (2005) examined the discursive construction of authenticity in the context of Welsh heritage tourism, and more particularly visitor attractions linked to the Welsh mining industry, by identifying different frames of authenticity deployed in promotional texts and other textual material relating to these sites. More recently, adopting a more multimodal and material approach, Pietikäinen (2013a) has investigated the production of authenticity in the context of Sámi heritage tourism, focusing on

a popular tourist attraction, a reindeer farm, marketed as authentic. Applying the Bakhtinian notion of centripetal and centrifugal forces, Pietikäinen examines the ways in which the authentication practices drawn upon in the reindeer farm on the one hand work towards standardisation and unification, on the other towards mixing and multiplying authenticity and generating new, more ambiguous interpretations of the notion. Focusing likewise on the Sámi context, but this time on handicraft and souvenir production, Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes (2011) analysed the problematics of creating both the authenticity and mobility required from a souvenir by examining the semiotics used in the labelling of souvenirs. Torabian and Arai (2013), on the other hand, have tried to grasp the tourists' perceptions of authenticity by examining travel blog posts. Although all these studies pay attention to how 'localness' is mobilised in the production (and consumption) of authenticity, they mostly neglect the question of what is at stake in these practices for the cultural entrepreneurs, a question examined in the present study (see, however, Heller 2011; Pietikäinen 2013a).

### ***3. Sámiland and the Dingle Peninsula as Peripheral Minority Language Sites in Economic Transition***

The two regions forming the locus of this study, Sámiland<sup>2</sup> in the far north of Finland and the Dingle Peninsula in the west of Ireland, have both similarities and differences. Both are multilingual minority language sites with Sámi<sup>3</sup> and Irish as official languages alongside Finnish and English respectively, and a multiplicity of other languages brought by the expanding tourism industry and diversifying flows of tourists (e.g. Moriarty 2013; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011). Moreover, both sites are geographically peripheral in their respective nation states and economically peripheral in their respective national economies, and as such target areas of neoliberal regional development (cf. Heller 2011). Like in many other similar peripheral minority language contexts, this development has involved investment in tourism and other forms of (small) entrepreneurship, especially crafts production, tapping into the local cultural heritage and other local resources (cf. Pujolar and Jones 2013: 102).

In Ireland, the crafts sector has gained significance as part of the larger 'creative industry' as a field which promises not only to boost the national economy but also to contribute, as the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) holds, to the 'preservation of our [i.e. the Irish] cultural heritage' (DCCoI / Overview for learners, no date) and to sustaining the peripheral areas of the country. This last is owing to the sector's capacity, as the council further notes, to provide 'sustainable enterprises in all areas, including those isolated rural communities ignored as unsuitable by other manufacturing sectors' (DCCoI / The Craft Industry, no date). Against this background, the Design and Crafts Council has developed into a main national actor which, besides running skills and design programmes (e.g. in ceramics, jewellery and goldsmithing), is devoted to 'communicating [the] unique identity [of the craft industry in Ireland] and stimulating quality design, innovation and competitiveness' (DCCoI / What we do, no date).

In Finnish Lapland, or Sámiland, commercial crafts production is less systematically promoted, tourism developed around the vision *Lapland - pure life force near you* being the main target of the investment of national funds (Lapland Tourism Strategy 2011–2014: 3). Handicrafts form, however, a significant part of the cultural heritage of the Sámi, the only indigenous people in the European Union. The production of ‘real’ Sámi handicrafts is protected in that it is strictly regulated with respect to production methods and materials and is certified with the official *Sámi duodji* label (see Dlaske 2014). Also the Sámi Education Institute, the main provider of courses in Sámi crafts, emphasises cultural preservation (The Sámi Education Institute, no date). As the tourism industry grows, however, initiatives funded by the EU and other organisations to promote crafts entrepreneurship have also started to gain a foothold in Sámiland (see Dlaske 2014; Miettinen 2006). Thus, apart from the official *duodji* handicrafts that are nowadays mainly produced for sale, more modern handicraft and design items drawing inspiration to a greater or lesser extent on the Sámi cultural heritage or just the ‘northern atmosphere’ are increasingly becoming part of the cultural tourism scene in Lapland (cf. Miettinen 1996; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011).

It is in these contexts that the two crafts artists in the focus of this study, whom we here call Caitleen and Pia, work as small entrepreneurs making ceramics. Before settling on the west coast of Ireland, Caitleen graduated from the Crafts College of Arts in Dublin, worked as a web designer, travelled abroad, and completed a two year Pottery Skills Course organised by the DCCoI. This course eventually allowed her to start her own business as a ceramic artist and to ‘return’ to the Dingle Peninsula where she had spent all her school holidays. Pia, on the other hand, grew up in Sámiland, but lived and studied afterwards essentially elsewhere. Besides southern Finland, where she had private lessons to learn to make pottery, she has resided in France, America and Spain. Nowadays, she lives partly in northern Finland and partly in Spain, and often travels in different parts of the world (see Kauppinen 2014; Dlaske 2014). Whereas Caitleen’s focus is solely on ceramics, Pia’s range of products includes paintings and a wide selection of other handicraft and design items. Some of these are traditional Sámi handicrafts, made in the tradition of *duodji*, but most of them are more modern variations on this, sold under Pia’s own label *Nativa* and the caption *Unique contemporary Sámi design* (see Dlaske 2014). Besides working as a crafts artist and entrepreneur, Pia also runs guesthouses and various tourist activities in both northern Finland and Norway (see Kauppinen 2014).

#### **4. Methodology and the Data of the Study**

To investigate how these two ceramic artists draw on and struggle to draw on localness as a source of authenticity in their work, and what is at stake in this for them, the present study draws on a nexus analytical approach (e.g. Scollon and Scollon 2004; Pietikäinen 2012, 2013a; 2013b; Kauppinen 2014). Pietikäinen (2013b: 82) has characterised this emerging approach aptly as

a form of multidimensional discourse analysis aimed at analysing the complexity and multiplicity of situated events and actions by examining the simultaneous coming together of participants, discourses, and interactional normativities at any given moment of language use.

In Scollonian terminology, the kind of crossroads described above is a *nexus of practice* (2004, viii, 12). Tied to this, the most important aspect of nexus analysis for the present study is its focus on social action. From the perspective of discourse studies, focusing on social action suggests a move away from studying (mere) texts and language ‘in the linguistic sense’ (cf. Blommaert 2005: 3) towards adopting multimodality and materiality as integral dimensions of discourse analytical examination (cf. Pietikäinen 2013a; Kauppinen 2014; Dlaske 2014).

Of the three analytical dimensions organising the nexus analytical approach, *discourses in place*, *historical bodies* and *interactional order* (e.g. Scollon and Scollon 2004: 19, 20; denoted in the quote above (Pietikäinen 2013b: 82) as discourses, participants and interactional normativities), the present study focuses on the two former. In Scollonian use, the dimension *discourses in place* refers besides discourses (as signification practices) to all kinds of other semiotic instances including stretches of talk, texts, signs and social practices (e.g. Scollon and Scollon 2004: 163). Although the attempt to try to grasp all possible manifestations of ‘discourse’ is admirable as such, it renders the category analytically obscure. To make this crucial category practicable for the purposes of the present study, I propose to subsume two main aspects under the dimension *discourses in place*: (1) the semiotic resources (including language, images, colours; e.g. van Leeuwen 2005; Blommaert 2010) and (2) the practices (Fairclough 1992; Pennycook 2010) on which social actors draw to carry out actions. The second dimension, historical bodies, refers to social actors’ ‘history of personal experience’ (Scollon and Scollon 2004: 13). As regards this dimension, the present study puts particular emphasis on the subject positions and embodied existence of social actors in particular physical locations, in order to investigate the effects of material circumstances not only on people’s ‘personal experience’ but also on what they are and what they do.

To be able to attend to these two dimensions, the study combines the perspectives of multimodal discourse studies (van Leeuwen 2005; Blommaert 2010; Pennycook 2010; Fairclough 1992) and an ethnographic approach (e.g. Heller 2008). The study data were collected drawing essentially on the latter. The data from Ireland were gathered during an intensive, two week long fieldwork period in 2013, the data from Lapland during several such periods in the years 2012-2014. The data consist of ethnographic interviews, field notes, photographs, selected items from the artists’ production, and media materials such as websites. These are complemented by insights obtained from informal conversations and ethnographic observations made during the fieldwork in the respective sites.

The analysis proceeded according to the three main activities, or analytical cycles, of the nexus analytical approach (cf. Scollon and Scollon 2004: 9; Pietikäinen 2012: 419, 420). The first cycle, *engaging the nexus of practice*, included zooming in (Hult 2010) on two smaller, for the purposes of this study particularly crucial, nexuses within the larger nexus of ceramics

production, and identifying the crucial practices and semiotic resources involved in the production of authenticity by drawing on the notion of localness. The first nexus is related to the production process, the second to the products themselves. The second cycle, *navigating the nexus of practice*, involved examining in more detail how the ceramic artists draw on these practices and semiotic resources, analysing the connections between these practices and resources, the historical bodies of the actors and broader social processes, as well as investigating what tensions, conflicts and consequences emerge in these processes. The third cycle, *changing the nexus of practice*, entails critical consideration of the wider implications of the results of the investigation (cf. Pietikäinen 2012: 420; Scollon and Scollon 2004: 152–178). In the following examination, we will first look at the nexus related to the production process, and more particularly to signalling authenticity through ‘local production’, then at the other, related to the production of authenticity through the semiotics of the products.

## ***5. Localness as a Source of Authenticity in Ceramics Production***

### **5.1 Signalling Authenticity through ‘Local Production’: Semiotising the Process**

In their study of fourteen international travel blogs, Torabian and Arai (2013: 11) highlight the notion of ‘crafting by hand and produced locally by artist’ as a major criterion used by tourists in considering the authenticity of souvenirs. However, as the following examination shows, signalling authenticity through ‘local production’ is by no means only a matter of material work, but is increasingly also sought by semiotic means making the dimension of ‘discourses in place’ a revealing lens for investigation. Moreover, in view of the ‘historical bodies’ of the actual actors, the seemingly progressive notion, ‘produced locally by artist’, (Torabian and Arai 2013: 11; Yang and Wall 2009: 251) shows itself as anything but unproblematic and draws attention to the political nature of authenticities. To investigate these aspects in more detail, we will first visit Caitleen’s workshop in Ireland, then move to Pia’s handicraft shop in Sámiland.

Caitleen’s workshop is located in the depths of the Irish countryside, surrounded by green fields, old stone fences and flocks of sheep, some half an hour’s drive from the nearest town. The town, which initially grew around the fishing industry in the 19th century, later developed into a lively tourist destination with small guesthouses, cafés, pubs, art galleries and handicraft shops inviting both national and international visitors. Caitleen’s workshop is a picturesque building, with gleaming white roughcast walls and bright red door and window frames. As its long, low shape suggests, it is an old cowshed, which Caitleen converted first into a workshop, and then, to avoid daily commuting, into an apartment as well. The workshop is divided into two areas: at the front part an exhibition area and shop, and around this attractive, tidy island the actual workshop, with a potter’s wheel at the back, buckets, chunks of clay, half-ready cups and different kinds of working tools leaning against the walls. In the shop area, the products - colourful mugs, cups, bowls

and plates - are displayed on small tables, shelves and window ledges. Between the items Caitleen has placed Design and Crafts Council cards displaying on a white background a large red fingerprint over which is written the slogan 'imagined, designed, made in Ireland'. The slogan makes use of the commonplace trope *made in X*. But instead of just recycling this rather worn-out phrase, the slogan recreates it by extending the scope of reference from merely 'making' to 'designing' and 'imagining'. In so doing, the slogan connects the whole process of production, from the first imagination to the actual fabrication, to one location, Ireland. In addition to these cards signifying her work, Caitleen has another label visible in her shop, stating 'Original Kerry.<sup>4</sup> The craft of creating'. The label indicates that Caitleen and her ceramics belong to a network of selected crafts artists and products considered to embody 'original Kerry', in the sense of being both authentic and distinctive. Original Kerry is an initiative designed to promote local craft entrepreneurs. The initiative has an annual call for membership. Craft makers who fulfil a number of criteria, such as that the 'work is handmade, originates from Kerry and is produced in Ireland' (Original Kerry / Makers, no date), can be accepted as members for the coming year. Besides featuring the selected craft makers on its homepage, the organization arranges craft events and promotes Craft Trails, regional routes leading visitors from one craft artist to another allowing the guests, as the website puts it, 'to explore [--] and experience [--] the process of fine craft making with many of the County's fabulous craft makers' (Original Kerry / About, no date). This participatory practice clearly taps into the emerging trend of experience tourism and the notion of 'the new tourist', someone looking for involvement and 'authentic, interactive and educational experiences' (Stănciulescu, Molnar, Bunghez 2011, 249). As such this participatory practice operates as an additional means to reinforce the sense of localness and the notion of local production, and thereby the sense of authenticity, suggesting that it does not suffice to discursively assert that the products are made, designed and imagined in Ireland, or to provide images of the local artists at work (e.g. [www.originalkerry.com](http://www.originalkerry.com)), but that visitors need to be given the opportunity to witness, or to 'explore' and 'experience', the process of production for themselves, which, in turn, also acts upon the 'interaction order', or the 'interactional normativities' (Pietikäinen 2013b: 82), between the artists and their customers.

As part of the Original Kerry initiative, Caitleen and her workshop are also part of the Kerry Craft Trails. On Caitleen's website, there is a detailed description of how to get to the workshop and a reference to the opening hours stating rather informally: 'The workshop is open 10am to 5pm tue - sat. However if you are making a special trip it is a good idea to phone ahead to make sure I'm there, especially during jan/feb.' This short reference makes visible a number of issues emanating from the practice of putting the production process on display for visitors. First of all, Caitleen needs to be there, at her workshop, as she promises, from 10 am to 5 pm five days a week. Although the additional suggestion to phone beforehand leaves open the possibility that she might not be there, especially during the winter months, the formulation 'to make sure I'm there' effectively implies that she will. Moreover, the suggestion implies that she is continuously available, at least by phone. In reality, as Caitleen tells me, 'there's definitely about eight months a

year when I don't really go anywhere because I need to be in the workshop every day.' Besides indicating availability, the advice to call the artist directly paired with the informal style suggests a rather familiar relationship to the visitor-customers. This is indeed another important factor, for visiting the workshop is not only about witnessing the process of craft making, but also about being able to engage with the local artist, which Torabian and Arai (2013: 11) highlight as another practice that 'add[s] a layer of authenticity' to the products. What is at stake when one fails to draw on these authentication practices requiring (constant) physical presence will be investigated below. For this, we will move on to examine Pia's 'historical body' and her production practices.

Pia's handicraft shop is located in a small village, Inari, some three hundred kilometers north of the Arctic Circle. The village, traditionally a political and cultural centre for the Sámi, is nowadays also an increasingly popular tourist destination, with the local, indigenous Sámi culture as its main attraction (Pietikäinen 2013a; Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011; Kauppinen 2014). Besides visiting a major Sámi museum, tourists, coming mainly from Japan, France and Germany, are invited to attend reindeer safaris, look for the northern lights, and go on guided berry-picking trips in the local forest and skiing tours on the local lake. Visitors can try reindeer stew or dishes made from local fish, berries and mushrooms in the restaurants, and visit the handicraft and souvenir shops that offer a selection which ranges from the official *duodji* to things only remotely resembling Sámi, or northern, culture and nature (cf. Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011).

Pia's handicraft shop, an old, red wooden building, is located next to her guesthouse close to the centre of the village along the main road. The sign *Käsitöitä Crafts* above the door invites passers-by to drop in to the shop. The shop, comprising one room, brims with brightly coloured handicraft items of different kinds: bags and clothes, accessories and jewellery along with various home decoration items are arranged on shelves, tables and racks, with some items on the floor. Some of the ceramic products, plates, cups and bowls, are laid out in the large shop window, others are arranged on a wooden table. There is a sales desk in the shop, at which Pia or one of her shop assistants sit, occasionally sewing a pouch or threading beads onto a string while waiting for customers, but there is no workshop drawing attention to the origin of the ceramics. This is because the ceramics are not made there, not even in the region; not even in the country. A look at Pia's 'historical body' gives us insight into why this is the case.

After learning the art of ceramics production (see Section 3), Pia had decided to try to make larger series for sale. 'I have a potter's wheel here' she says, 'and I tried to collaborate with the [Sámi vocational] school, if I could have fired the items there, they have an oven, but no one knows how to use it [--] and then when we started to spend time in Spain I realised that we are in a ceramics region par excellence'.<sup>5</sup> And so she had gone and asked in the Spanish workshops if she could work there. Soon enough she found a place in an old, family-led pottery and now she spends some two weeks every year in the workshop making the ceramics she needs to stock her shop for the rest of the year. For her this is a good arrangement: in Spain she has learned a lot about techniques and colours, she can make larger series and use techniques

which she would not be able to with the oven in the Sámi school. However, the arrangement does not come without a price, and this is because this *modus operandi* makes it impossible for Pia to draw on the authenticating effect of 'local production', either discursively or displayed in practice. As noted above, Pia is a busy woman, often travelling and engaged in a range of (business) activities in Finland and abroad. This has raised the question among her customers, she tells me, of how she has time to make ceramics, on top of everything else, and it has made them suspect that maybe, after all, the pieces are not made by her - despite the fact that every piece carries Pia's hand painted initials on the bottom. The only solution available to her was to resort to additional semiotic means, to take photographs of herself at work in the Spanish workshop and to show these to her customers to prove that it really is her the 'local' Sámi artist who makes the ceramics. However, the photographs serve not only to prove the authenticity of her products, but also to avert a more fundamental 'credibility problem', that is, in Pia's words 'whether I have the ceramics done by some little niggers or some... little Hispanics there crafting them for me..'. Pia's account does not reveal whether her customers have actually expressed this doubt. What becomes clear, however, is that she is aware of constantly running the risk of appearing morally and ethically questionable in the eyes of her customers by not only possibly selling faked authenticity but also exploiting a vulnerable workforce. Despite the ironic tone, the account reflects a real concern. Pia's case suggests that if cheap (mass) production in countries of the global South has increased the value of 'all things local' (Weiss 2011: 444) in the global North (cf. Torabian and Arai 2013: 10), the inflationary use of the trope of localness (along with similar tropes such as fair trade, or organic) has started to cause, 'credibility problems' for those not able to offer proof to support their claims. Against this background, the practice of showcasing the production process as promoted by the Original Kerry initiative does not appear merely additional, but essential.

Although showing photographs of herself at work might help Pia to dispel doubts about the origin of her products, it does not alter the fact that she is often away and therefore unable to embrace the emerging interactional normativities by engaging with the customers and visitors in her shop. Due to her frequent travels and other activities, the shop is mostly taken care of by short-term helpers from many different countries (e.g. Germany, Holland, USA, Colombia, Spain), who due to inadequate language skills or knowledge, are often unable to tell customers about the products on sale there (see Dlasko forthcoming). Besides causing awkward situations and outright conflicts between customers and shop assistants (Dlasko forthcoming), this practice takes away from the customer experience the additional layer of authenticity which the possibility of personally engaging with the local artist brings (cf. Torabian and Arai 2013: 11). Being largely unable to evoke authenticity through 'local production', Pia has to resort to the means she does have available to her - the semiotics of the products.

## 5.2 Signalling Authenticity through the Semiotics of the Products: Signs of Place

For both Caitleen and Pia their surroundings provide an important source of inspiration in the creation of their ceramics. The difference lies in where the artists find themselves, which goes back to their different 'historical bodies', brings different 'discourses in place' and ultimately yields different consequences to the respective actors in the contemporary political economy of authenticities.

Caitleen's range of ceramics consists of a variety of coffee/tea mugs, milk/dressing jugs, serving cups, and salad and dessert bowls of different sizes. They look light and cheerful; most of the items have a white background and they are decorated with different shades of light blue and green, some with various shades of orange and yellow. The most frequent motifs include stylised birds, leaves and fishes along with playful spots, stripes and spirals (see Figure 1). When I ask about her sources of inspiration for her decoration practices, she replies: 'I suppose I've looked at a lot of different things and it all goes in, you know, you kind of filter it and it kind of comes out in some way'. More specifically she explains: 'There is, maybe it's not totally obvious, but there is a lot of 1970s and 60s kind of influence in the background and.. [--] A lot of people in Ireland would have grown up with a certain style of pottery that has those blue stripes on the outside.' Besides the local cultural influence, there are other, far more 'obvious' sources. She goes on to talk about her colour choices:

When I first started here I used some of the local colours as a kind of starting so.. like the blue of the sea, the kind of tranquillising blue, and the green fields and, different kind of greens, so I started like that but I think in the last year I just kind of started adding other different colours and mix and often I just try things, I try lots of different things [--] and then often you see when customers come in what they like [--]

Like the colours, many of the motifs rise from her immediate surroundings. She explains further:

Like the little bird that I use, there's lots of wrens around here [--] so I really like those, and the bird that's on the cup it actually doesn't look like a wren at all but that's kind of what was in my mind, like a little fat, a little cute bird like that, so.. and the fish just because of the sea, it's just, you couldn't not be influenced by that. [--] I suppose, I'm not really even thinking about it, but they just appear.



**Figure 1.** Salad bowl and dressing jug from Caitleen’s range of ceramics.  
(Photo: Kati Dlaske)

In Caitleen’s description, the incorporation, or relocation (Pennycook 2010) of colours and motifs from the surroundings into her ceramics seems to be not only a natural, but also somehow a mystical and nearly deterministic process, as the expressions *it all goes in [--] you kind of filter it and it kind of comes out in some way, I’m not really even thinking about it, they just appear* and the comment *you couldn’t not be influenced by that* suggest. Moreover, Caitleen describes in detail the ‘evolution’, the different phases, of ‘trial and error’ out of which her items emerge. Although all this suggests a process of artistic creation, later in our talk Caitleen introduces a distinction between art and craft, considering herself to be rather a craftsperson and, as she swiftly adds, ‘definitely a business woman anyway ’cos just to be practical, you have to be, if you want to pay all the bills and that kind of things’. Subsequently she reflects further on her position:

I don’t feel like I’m compromised.. but, I mean, sometimes you have to be careful not to, ah, get sort of, ahm, [unclear] you have to make things that people want to buy, so... and I suppose that I’m quite lucky in that... so far... people have wanted to buy the things that I’ve made. But I suppose it could be totally different if I had a real like a burning desire to make something completely different that wasn’t something that people want to buy. Then, you know, I’d have a real problem.

Caitleen struggles to spell out what it is she needs to be careful about, but the bottom line is clear: ‘you have to make things that people want to buy.’ While saying so, she strongly emphasises the verb *have to*. ‘Luckily’, although not very surprisingly, her ceramics, with their reflections of aspects of the local nature both through their colours and motifs, have met the expectations of the tourists who come to visit her workshop in the hope of finding products embodying ‘Original Kerry’. ‘So far’, Caitleen has been doing well, thanks not only to her ‘practical’ orientation, but also to her physical location, whose influence translates into the kind of authenticity customers are looking for. To examine the problematics and the creative solutions that emerge when the ‘locality’ of the crafts artist does not match with the ‘locality’ of the tourist-consumers, let us turn again to Pia’s ceramics production.

Like Caitleen's range of ceramics, Pia's selection consists of functional items for everyday use, such as cups, plates and bowls. They are painted by hand in strong, bright colours including different shades of blue, yellow, orange, green and lilac. Like the influence of the 1970s' Irish ceramics in Caitleen's production, although it may not be 'totally obvious', the strong colours of Pia's ceramics that also characterise many of her other handicrafts and paintings reflect the Sámi tradition of using strong colours, especially blue, red, green and yellow (see Dlaske 2014). However, Sámiland is not Pia's only place of residence, nor is it the only, or even primary, constituent of her 'mental landscape' (cf. Kauppinen 2014). Apart from currently living partly in Spain and crafting her ceramics there, she has spent part of her life in France, where she studied arts, crafts and gastronomy and ran a restaurant with her (ex) French partner. Because of her multi-local life, the main local influence on her work derives not from the North but from the South, and especially from France. She introduces her range of ceramics:

Well, I have these little espresso cups [--] and different sizes of these... from tiny coffee cups to large salad bowls, these large bowls we in France use for salads, pasta and the like. And I have some plates too, but they are not my favourites, they are boring to make [--] and this [she refers to an item resembling a muesli bowl] for me this is a *café au lait* cup, yeah, it's, again, from my beloved France, you know, there people drink their morning coffee from these, so yeah, this comes from there.

Particularly noteworthy here are Pia's references to France ('we in France'; 'my beloved France'), indicating her affiliation to this particular place. Also Pia's ceramics are the product of the genuine local influence of a place of particular significance in her personal life trajectory. However, Pia is rarely there in her shop to tell her customers about the origins of her products, and even if she was, this is not really the kind of authenticity and localness tourists are looking for in a Sámi handicraft shop in Lapland. What they are looking for is something that 'looks Sámi' and can later operate as a tangible sign of the place in which they have spent their holiday (cf. also Torabian and Arai 2013: 10, 12; Urry 1995: 133; Pietikäinen 2013a; Kauppinen 2014). The emblematic sign of Lapland in general and the Sámi culture in particular is the reindeer. Thus virtually anything that has to do with reindeer is in great demand among tourists in Lapland. Well aware of this, Pia has taken on the practice of decorating her *café au lait* cups and salad bowls with images of reindeer, painted in black, with thin brush strokes resembling Japanese characters. Another motif she has adopted for the same reasons, as she puts it, 'to attract customers', is a pattern resembling the rock carvings of Alta (among others), a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northernmost Norway picturing aspects of prehistoric life (possibly even pre-Sámi life) in the Arctic (UNESCO, no date). This motif can be found engraved on Pia's colourful espresso cups (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Espresso cup and *café au lait* cup from Pia's range of ceramics.  
(Photo: Kati Dlaske)

As the next passage reveals, it is not only the tourists who seem to take Pia's authentication practices quite seriously, although Pia herself views them rather light-heartedly. She explains about the motif on the espresso cup:

Well on these espresso cups, the patterns don't actually stem from anywhere except my imagination. So there was this museum, there these wonderful researchers had investigated in painstaking detail... they had considered what all [kinds of motifs there are]... so they had come to the conclusion that there is a mixture of them from different areas. I said that that's very possible because they come straight from my head! I don't know exactly what they had found, but if you look at these more closely, you'll realise that they are just my scribbles...

While Pia's own affiliations and desires in ceramics production point in a decisively different direction, she has adopted a highly reflective, seemingly carnivalesque (Pietikäinen 2013b; Bakhtin 1968) approach to the tourists' assumption that signs of Sámi/Northern culture and nature are marks of authenticity. However, although laughing at it undoubtedly makes the doing of it more fun, it does not change the fact that the reindeer images have to 'jump onto the products' so that she 'gets them sold', as Pia puts it. What started in the name of artistic freedom and creativity ends, here as elsewhere, at the ultimate signifier: customer orientation.

## **6. Conclusions**

The increased emphasis of the new economy on the tertiary sector, and especially on tourism and the creative industries, has opened up new opportunities for peripheral minority language sites to capitalise on local identity, culture and nature. For the local crafts makers the move towards the logics of the new economy has provided new opportunities as well, in terms not only of economic profit, but also of personal life choices and artistic freedom. While this transition has made it possible for Caitleen to move back

to where she had spent her childhood summers, it has allowed Pia to choose a mobile lifestyle. Both are in a position to live out their artistic creativity and to do what they 'really enjoy'. At the same time, however, this transition is creating new normativities which translate into new constraints. Moreover, far from creativity, passion and enjoyment at work being antithetical to the capitalist work ethos, let alone subversive of it, in contemporary neoliberal, affective capitalism, they operate as technologies which not only align humanist values with economic interests, but transform individual affectivities into economic profit (Bröckling 2007; Petersson McIntyre 2014).

Regarding authenticity, to extend Pietikäinen's (2013) application of the Bakhtinian (1981) metaphor, the logics of the new economy contribute to both centrifugal and centripetal forces organising authenticity. In Pia's case, the centrifugal forces allow her to make 'unique, contemporary Sámi design' drawing on production methods and materials which would not be seen anywhere in the realm of *duodji*, the traditional Sámi handicraft (see Dlaske 2014). Her ceramics production is a point in case here. Caitleen, on the other hand, as she says, can make 'contemporary stuff that's also handmade and Irish' instead of resorting to 'Celtic symbols and artwork [--] and those kind of more old fashioned things.' The centripetal forces work in the opposite direction. Here they are driven essentially by the promotion of localness as a source of authenticity and the related, all-encompassing rationality of customer orientation. As the analysis has shown, the notion of localness works not only to gear artistic production and the products towards this particular *signifiant*, but also towards fixing the material work process and the working bodies in particular places.

While the trope *made in X* has established itself as the idiomatic indication of the origin of a product, when localness becomes the main asset, it is not enough. Building on this well-known trope, the Design and Crafts Council's slogan *Imagined designed made in Ireland*, which is intended to signify all products promoted by the institution, extends the claim about origin from just the making to the whole production process. In so doing, it comes to attach, symbolically but normatively the bodies doing the imagining, designing and making to a particularly place, Ireland. However, in the contemporary experience economy, mere stating is not enough. People want - and are urged - to see, explore and engage. So not only is the production process put on display, but visitors are allowed to personally engage with the artist. Hence, not only does the artist need to be present in her (or his) workshop at least during the tourist season, but she (or he) needs to be available virtually at any time in case a potential visitor-customer would like to reach her (or him.) Even if the practice of disclosing the production process seems to be a move towards dismantling the logics of capitalist commodity fetishism and therefore the logics of value ascription (Marx 1992 [1867], in fact, the opposite is the case. Caitleen's example shows how in the new economy, in the search for new sources of value (Heller and Duchêne 2012), instead of being merely an indispensable source of commodities, the labour process is rendered a (part of the) commodity itself. Thus material work becomes semiotic work and, as such, part and parcel of the semiotic practices drawn upon in the production of authenticity. It is this semiotic dimension of the material labour that ultimately works to tie the crafts artists to a particular place, all the way down to one's own workshop. Although these fixing forces are not entirely

coercive, they are normative; those not able or willing to comply have to cope with the consequences, and try to come up with alternative ways of authentication, as Pia's example suggests.

As for the products themselves, ceramics belong to neither the Sámi nor the Irish cultural heritage. Moreover, clay, the material of ceramics, cannot be sourced from either the Lappish or the Irish soil. Thus the ceramic products crafted by Pia and Caitleen neither represent the local cultural heritage, nor can they draw on the advantage of being produced 'using local materials', a common source of authenticity that ranks high among tourists (Torabian and Arai 2013: 10; Heller 2011: 146–162). The link to the particular place needs to be created, however artificially, by using other semiotic means. By illuminating this process, the cases examined here make visible how the promotion of localness as a source of authenticity normatively guides the process of artistic creation, albeit to a different degree and in a somewhat different manner in each location. While in Ireland the notion of localness allows Caitleen to do 'more modern stuff', in Sámiland it drives Pia to reproduce stereotypical, literally archaic, indexes of Sámi culture (cf. Pietikäinen 2013a; McLaughlin 2013). Furthermore, especially Pia's case throws into relief how the promotion of localness acts upon the value of different authenticities. It is certainly not the case that without the images of reindeer and cave paintings Pia's ceramics would be inauthentic. They are authentic *Sámi* handicraft in that they are made by hand by a Sámi person - a notion of authenticity that Pia repeatedly highlights in our discussions. They are authentic *ceramic crafts* in that besides being made by hand, they are genuine products of Pia's artistic creativity and inspiration. Although these types of authenticity might have more value in other discursive surroundings, they are not what people travelling to a Sámi heritage tourism destination are primarily looking for. Hence, the right kind of authenticity needs to be additionally created by adding signs pointing to local nature and culture. Moreover, as Pia is unable to produce additional value by drawing on the authenticating effect of showcasing the creation process and engaging personally with visitors, she arguably needs to invest more heavily in the semiotisation of her products. For Pia herself, these authentication practices have an evidently inauthenticating effect. If the carnivalesque stance she adopts allows her to play around with the normativities of consumer orientation (cf. Pietikäinen 2013b), rather than contributing to their subversion, it facilitates a joyful fulfilment of these expectations.

This study investigated how ceramic artists working in two peripheral minority language sites draw, struggle and fail to draw on localness as a source of authenticity in their work. Drawing on an nexus analytical approach and focusing in particular on the dimensions of 'discourses in place' and 'historical bodies', the study provided insight not only into how authenticity is discursively produced, but also into how authenticities are political, terrain of power relations and conflicting interests, and have very material consequences for the actors involved in their production.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The study was conducted in the context of a research project 'Peripheral Multilingualism; sociolinguistic ethnography of contestation and innovation in multilingual Sámi, Corsican, Irish and Welsh indigenous and minority language contexts' ([www.peripheralmultilingualism.fi](http://www.peripheralmultilingualism.fi)), funded by the Academy of Finland. In this connection, I would particularly like to thank Dr Lindsay Bell and Dr Helen Kelly-Holmes as well as the two anonymous reviewers for insightful comments and suggestions on the earlier versions of the paper.
- <sup>2</sup> The traditional Sámi homeland area, Sápmi, covers northern parts of Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian Lapland as well as part of north-west Russia. The focus of this article lies in the Finnish part of the area.
- <sup>3</sup> Although often referred to as 'the Sámi language', there are, in fact, nine different Sámi languages spoken in different regions of Sápmi. While the largest, Northern Sámi, has some 30,000 speakers, the number of speakers of other Sámi languages varies from a couple of hundred to just a few (see e.g. Pietikäinen 2008). In comparison, according to the 2011 Census there are 1,774,437 speakers of Irish in Ireland, which equals 41.1 % of the population (CSO, no date).
- <sup>4</sup> Kerry is a county in Southwest Ireland.
- <sup>5</sup> The interviews with Pia were conducted in Finnish. The English translations are the author's.

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